1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
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INDUSTRIES AND IMPLEMENTS.

281 When a skin was brought in, it was hung on a sort of tripod, and with a chisel-like flesher of buffalo-leg bone the meat was removed. Then the hide was stretched on the ground to dry. When dried, the hair and thin coat of skin on the same side were cut off with the familiar implement of bent elk-horn, always provided, in recent times, with a metal blade. To make rawhide, nothing more was done. To make dressed skin, liver, grease, and brains, boiled and mixed in the proper proportion, were rubbed [177] or soaked into the skin and then removed with an ordinary scraper, now usually of sheet-iron or tin. Finally the skin was worked over with a rough stone or a bone. In preparing buffalo-skins for a tent, four steps were recognized: first, drying the skins; next, removing the hair; third, soaking them; and, last, scraping and working them over. Skins were softened by being drawn over a rope of buffalo-sinew.

281 When a woman had prepared enough buffalo-skins for a tent, she made
342 a feast and invited other women who were skilful at making tents. The most
476 expert of these fitted and tacked the skins together loosely, and the others sewed them fast. When a robe was to be embroidered, the woman who wanted to make it prepared food and invited other women to help her in her work. When the robe was finished, the man who was to receive it was called in, and it was given to him.

281 Caps of buffalo-skin were worn in winter. They were provided with flaps that were pulled down over the ears and held by a string fastened under the chin. Mittens of buffalo-skin were also used, tied together by a string which passed behind the neck. When the hunter was ready to shoot, he slipped his hands out of the mittens.

282 Simple flat unbraided ropes of rawhide were cut out of the skin in a long spiral. After having been cut, they were stretched between two sticks. In order to soften them, they were covered with manure, or tied to a horse that dragged them over the ground until they became pliable.

323 Pottery is declared to have been made formerly of clay mixed with
252 crushed rock. Rawhide bags, drawn together at the top with a string, were also used for cooking by means of hot rocks. The often described Plains method of cooking in holes in the ground lined with rawhide was also followed.

372 When fire was struck with flint and steel, dry mushrooms were sometimes used as tinder.

411 Bows were most frequently made of cherry-wood, but sometimes of ash. Ash was harder and more elastic, but more brittle. Sinew backing was

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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CHAPTER IV

ECONOMIC ASPECTS

Labor

In the production of economic goods the man supplied the great bulk of raw materials by means of hunting, doing relatively little collecting and processing. He was responsible, however, for the supply and care of the major means of production, the horse. The chief objects manufactured by him were bows, arrows, clubs, shields, and ceremonial equipment.[1] The woman, on the other hand, supplied only a small part of the raw materials, through collecting, but did most of the processing of raw materials and manufacturing.

Cooperation within the household was necessary for production, and the household was practically a self-sufficient unit with relatively little reliance on the cooperative work of others. In actuality there was quite a bit of mutual help, especially among relatives. There was, of course, a certain amount of dependence of the man on his fellows in hunting in the sense that men usually hunted buffalo in groups and, in view of the common welfare, an individual was restrained from selfishly hunting alone and scattering the herd on which his fellows were depending. Nevertheless the operation was a collective rather than a truly cooperative one because, once the chase started, each man was on his own and had the right of disposal over whatever game he killed. It was stated that in any given run the most a man could kill would be seven or eight buffalo and that almost inevitably some would get none. No one went home empty-handed, however, for the more fortunate

[1] Maximilian noted in 1833 that men make only arms and smoking equipment (p. 103), and that among the Gros Ventres were many war clubs "made of the long end of an elk's horn" and "daggers" of jaws and teeth of a bear (p. 75). For other details of materials and manufacture, see Kroeber, 1908, pp. 150–51. For illustration of a shield, see photograph, courtesy of Richard Pohrt, pl. 3.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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would share at least the meat, if not the hides, with the less fortunate, which latter would contribute by helping skin and butcher.

Butchering was quite an art and was considered the man's work, although occasionally women accompanied the hunting party if there were a shortage of men, as was liable to be the case especially in winter. Should the party have crossed a river to hunt, the meat was prepared for transportation on a raft by being cut into large chunks, and each two chunks skewered and joined by a thong of sufficient length to hang on the poles forming the raft. The raft was built by crossing two long poles at one end, the other ends free and forming an angle of about thirty degrees. Three or four shorter poles were placed crosswise and lashed firmly in place with rawhide. The paunch of the buffalo, after being washed out, was used as a container for the many leftover bits of meat and was tied to the middle of the lower rung of the raft. A whole beef could thus be loaded on such a raft and towed across by one horseman. When, as was more usually the case, the meat was to be packed back to camp by horses, the butchering was done differently but in such a way that a whole buffalo could be packed on a single horse.[1] Sometimes in winter when a small party went out and they could not pack all the meat back in one trip, the remainder was buried in the snow and called for the following day.

Once the proceeds of the hunt were turned over to the households of the individual hunters, it was the woman's task to cook the food for immediate consumption and to prepare the surplus for storage. Her most arduous and time-consuming task was the dressing of skins and the manufacture of these into finished articles of clothing, containers, lodge-covers, and so on. It was stated that skins in one stage of preparation or another were nearly always at hand.[2] "They didn't do things in a haphazard way because there was a certain time to do this and a certain time to do that." From the hides of buffalo killed during the spring and early summer, when the hair was not thick, they made the parfleshes and bags, soles for moccasins, rawhide ropes, and lodge-covers. In the fall, when the hide was furry, robes were made.

The older women informants described how, when they were

[1] Cf. Kroeber, 1908, p. 149.

[2] For some details on skin dressing, see Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

The older women in comments described, when they were young, they would work at scraping skins pegged to the ground, by leaning over from the waist, feet well apart and knees unbent, swinging sideways from the hips. They could keep up this rhythmical steady motion, with the short-handled scraper usually tipped with metal, for hours at a time, one day after another. Sometimes, too, a woman would spend a whole day softening ropes of rawhide by rubbing the rope which had been run through the eye and ear apertures of a buffalo skull upon which the horns had been left so that she, sitting on the ground with legs extended, could rest her feet against the horns as she pulled the rope back and forth, making it soft and white.[4] Nevertheless the tedium of these operations was often relieved by the fact that occasionally other women, who had at the moment some leisure, would hear the work going on and would volunteer to help.

It was customary for women to do much of their work in groups. If a young woman, for instance, wished to make a fine robe, she would call in some other women, including an older experienced "hand." The latter would mark the robe where the embroidery should go, and the younger women did the fancy work. The hostess would cook for all present and so, in a pleasant atmosphere of sociability and "woman talk," the work would progress. A similar type of gathering would be held when a sufficient number of hides had been saved to make a lodge cover.

In size the lodges ranged from six skins up to twenty-four or twenty-five, with the average of about fourteen to seventeen.[5] Much skill was needed for cutting and fitting the skins and an experienced woman would be called in to do that part, while the others helped with the task of sewing the skins together. Our informants stated that a woman would have to "save and save" skins towards a new lodge, which was a necessity about every three years.

Women went out in groups to pick berries and wild fruits as well as to dig roots, but each one had right of disposal over what

[4] Another method for softening ropes is given by Kroeber, 1908, p. 150.

[5] The largest lodge remembered by the Gros Ventres is said to have been that of the Blood Chief, Father of All, who had, at the time of the 1855 treaty, a lodge with two fires, poles 65 ft. long, and the cover consisting of more than 25 skins.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

462 she herself had picked or dug. In preparing the material for
476 storage, too, the women would sit in a big circle, pounding cherries
[251] for instance, one woman helping to crush the cherries brought in by another. But, again, while it lightened the work of an individual woman who might have gathered more than the others, there was no pooling of resources. Sociability and friendship were apparently the chief motives for joining such a work group.

463 While there was a slight amount of occupational specialization, there was no real division of labor in the sense that persons with, say, supernatural power to cure, and who were well paid for their services, would be supported by this means alone. Nor could a man live, for instance, by specializing in raiding and raising horses. Every man, whatever else he might do, would have to make at least an attempt to hunt. Similarly, regardless of the temporary division of tasks which might be assigned among the women of the household, no individual woman could profit sufficiently through her ability to cut and fit lodge covers or through her ability to embroider well. Some, who were more skilled at one task than another, might perhaps devote more time and energy to that pursuit, but the rewards therefor were more in the nature of prestige than of direct economic advantage. An old woman for instance might be adept at making buffalo-hair rope. Men desiring to have it, would give her things in exchange for it, but it is doubtful if she would receive sufficient from this one type of manufacture to make her independent of relatives, even so far as food was concerned.

464 The potential supply of labor consisted in all able-bodied men of the tribe from the age of about 17 or 18, at which time a young
[582] man was sufficiently skilled to hunt seriously, and of all able-bodied females from about the age of twelve, the time at which the
[162] average girl was married and was supposed to have been trained to woman's work. The unbalance of the sexes in favor of females, a marked feature in the population of the northern plains tribes,[4]
461 plus the fact that the tasks allotted to women could be begun at a much earlier age than those undertaken by men, meant that the amount of labor contributed by the woman, in manufacturing economic goods, was greater than the amount of labor available

[4] Cf. Wissler, 1936 (a), p. 38.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
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Thus we have the basis for the generalizations the Gros Ventres
183 make about their own culture. The principle seemed to be that
431 the more one gives, the more he gets. Coming Daylight explained: "Those who are stingy don't come up, they just go back, back, back. Those who are generous gets lots of things. My maternal uncle was very generous and I try to follow his example. I feed everybody—old men, children and everybody—and people give me lots of things. Stingy people would eat all by themselves and nobody would give things to anyone like that."

The attitude is further illustrated by the following statement by Singer in explaining that the one selected as Feather Pipe Keeper had to give up everything he owned and would be sitting naked and bereft of all property: "Then his relatives and friends bring him things to live on. It is a great thing to give to someone like that. But these people kind of share everything and it holds back the ones that are prosperous. Our belief was that in a little while the ones who give have everything again. This didn't mean that a person could be lazy since it was 'thrown up' to anyone if he sat around and didn't work."

183 Again, according to Coming Daylight, "Formerly they all
431 seemed to work in a bunch and work hard for a living. It seemed
476 like they were all one, and always helped one another and treated one another to things, especially to something they thought the other person didn't have. If a bunch of women went out to pick berries, they helped one another with pounding. If they had hides to tan, others seeing the work going on came and helped and in no time the work was done. Even if they dug turnips, which are hard to get, should they have brought in a lot, they passed them around. If someone had no horse to use in hunting, someone loaned him one."

Mary Ereaux mentioned: "The Gros Ventres are great ones for sharing and that keeps the more industrious ones down. They are not as present as generous as they used to be because they would be entirely out. But even today if a woman brings you some berries, later on you give her some sugar or something she needs. That is the way they always lived and still do."

In payment for services there is no set "price," so to speak, but there was a gradation according to the kind of service rendered. If an older experienced woman were called in to design a new

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

lodge cover, the hostess provided food and there was no other direct remuneration. If one sought knowledge as to how to use an ordinary medicinal root, something was given in exchange, but in a relatively small amount. On the other hand in compensation for the services of a medicine man, not only was food prepared, but in addition a much greater amount of property was given to the doctor, who in turn would see that those who had accompanied him to help in singing at the cure, would receive some goods as well. The amount offered to the doctor by the one paying for the services was governed by the reputation of the medicine man as well as by the individual's regard for his own reputation for generosity. People would say: "Look how much so-and-so thinks of his relative who was sick—he gave so much to the one who cured him." If the patient were very ill a whole family might really impoverish itself in paying doctors, were it necessary to call in one specialist after another, as sometimes happened.

Although apparently there was a tendency to call on relatives to perform services—such as naming a child, telling a war story at the erection of a new lodge, and so on—remuneration was forthcoming, although perhaps on not so large a scale as if a non-relative were called on to perform the same offices.

In addition to exchange of goods effected through generous hospitality and the prestige-requirements of ostentatious liberality, including payment for services, the distribution of goods within the tribe was aided by gambling. Wagers were matched by two competing individuals and bet on an all-or-nothing basis. Considerable amounts of property changed hands at a single match.[19]

[19] For a discussion of gambling among the Gros Ventres, see Flannery and Cooper, 1946.